

Ephesians 3:19-21, Part 2

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When we see him rightly, as our greatest joy, and our greatest satisfaction, our greatest delight, our greatest happiness, that is the maximum glory that we can give to our Creator.

So this is the final request that Paul has built up to, this request that, in a sense is what is praying in Romans eight, verse 15, that by the Spirit, we truly cry out in our hearts—Abba, Father. You are our father, you are our rock, you are everything. In your hand, you hold the key to all of my life's satisfaction, all of my life's joy. Apart from you, there is no true joy.

And so this is ultimately the fullness that I believe that Paul is praying for, the fullness of God, all that God is for us through the love of Christ, God's gift of himself in all the ways that his people can enjoy him and benefit from knowing him.

So, let's just take a few moments now. And I want to point out some things about this prayer, now that we sort of have the prayer complete, even though it's not complete yet. But now that we sort of have this prayer complete, let's just take a few moments, and let's just enjoy, if you will, the perfection of God's plan for the joy of his people, for the eternal happiness of his people.

We are, the power of His love strengthens us in our inner man, making us more aware of his love for us, which strengthens us in our inner man, which makes us more aware of his love for us, which strengthens us in our inner man. So you see how this this dynamic of God's growing us and our comprehension and our understanding and our experiencing of His love for us, you see how this is this is, in a sense, like this snowball, this spiritual snowball rolling downhill.

Now he said last week, that this perception, this understanding of the love of God for His people, like any perception of any experience, any understanding of any experience is limited by the nature of the creature that's experiencing it. So our example one example from last week was a goldfish. You're taking a goldfish home from the pet store and a little Ziploc bag, you know, and as you drive the goldfish home, the goldfish experiences everything of your ride. He experiences the scenery, the music, that you're playing on the radio, the person honking their horn at you. But his experience of that ride home is limited by what he is—which is a goldfish.

So the experience isn't lessened. It's the same experience for you and the goldfish. But the perception of that experience is quite different, according to the nature of the one doing the experiencing. So we—this, this knowledge of God that surpasses knowledge—is an experiencing of His love that surpasses our ability to perceive it. Because our nature limits our ability to perceive the love of God, yet, here's the thing, we are being changed in our nature. And that's the whole thing to see. Our Nature limits how we can understand the love of God for us in Christ. Yet our nature is being changed—from one degree to another we are being changed so that the perception of this is greatly increased.

Again, Second Corinthians 3:17 and 18—We all with unveiled face are beholding the glory of the Lord and are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. This is what happens when the soul is stretched by the experiencing of the love of God for His people. The stretching of that soul causes the soul to have greater perception of the love of God for them. Like the wine and the wine skins that burst the wine skins, but in a different way, the love of God poured out for his people in our soul stretches our soul so that our soul can grasp it more fully more deeply, and doing so we're transformed into one who can greater, in greater ways grasp that.

So you see how the love of God is working. Now here's the thing to see. The love of God for His people is both the means and the goal of this whole process. And this is really beautiful. The love of God for His people in Jesus Christ, is both the means of our transformation, and the goal of our transformation.

Our transformation that we just described is being brought about in our souls through the means of God's love for His people. Yet this realization, this full realization of the love of God for His people is also the goal of that transformation.

Now, I thought this week of, of what I could compare this to. What other experience and all of the human experience compares to something in which the goal of something is also the means that you achieve the goal. And I thought of some false comparisons that the world might suggest for us. We've all heard it said that life is a journey. Life is not a destination. And so the goal of life is not to get somewhere but to live it, right?

Okay. There, that may sound similar—that's not the same thing. Because at the end of life, you die. The goal of the love of Christ for His people, is the love of Christ for His people. In the purest sense, in the fullest sense, what God wants for us, what his plan for us is, is to bring us to a place in which we, being glorified, now have a full perception of the love of God for His people shown to us in Jesus Christ. And the way that God gets us there is by the love of God for his people through Christ.

That's pretty profound. Nothing else works that way. Everything else in your life is some sort of goal, that you use something else to get to. Now the something you used to get to it might be enjoyable, it might not be so enjoyable. And the goal that you're working for, might be some sort of ultimate goal in life, or it might be something short of that. But everything else in your life works that way. You use something, to get something else. Nothing else in the human experience is true for this and, in the sense that the reward itself is how you attain the reward.

This is why Paul begins this whole section by telling us—every blessing in Christ is already ours. We already have the love of God for His people shown in Christ. Our hindrance is perceiving it. How will we perceive it? By the love of God's people shown to us through Christ.

So there's two fallacies that we can fall into in this Christian experience. Two fallacies of this whole thing of the love of Christ is the goal, the love of Christ is the means. And those fallacies are pretty easy to see. The first one

is: to understand that the love of Christ is the means by which we're transformed, but to miss the fact that the love of Christ is the goal.

So the love of Christ is how we are transformed, but the love of Christ is not what we're praying and looking to be transformed into. That fallacy is better known as 'the prosperity gospel.' The prosperity gospel understands that the love of Christ shown to us is the means of transformation. They just misunderstand what the goal of being transformed into is. And they see the love of Christ is that which gives to us that which we want more than the love of Christ, which is—in many cases—earthly things: better job, nicer car, health, freedom from disease, comfort in life, respect. And Christ is the one to bring us those things, but we misunderstand that what the love of Christ is meant and intended to bring us to, which is the love of Christ. Instead, we see the love of Christ as bringing us to that which we really want—which are often earthly blessings, sometimes their eternal blessings.

Sometimes we see the love of Christ as intended to greater to bring us to greater eternal blessings than the love of Christ itself. I see this often show up in the words of believers that I oftentimes, I'll just kind of hold my breath, when I hear believers talk about the next life in terms like this: terms that are exclusive to the removal of pain, the removal of sickness and seeing loved ones again.

Now that's an eternal blessing. That's an eternal reward. But do you see how that's awfully close to becoming the main reward when that is how you view the next life? That the love of Christ is intended to get you to the thing that you really want, which is freedom from sickness, freedom from pain and seeing your loved ones again.

So the love of Christ is the means to the end, only we get the end wrong. It's like a ticket, you know, think of something that you need a ticket to go to. Like—only thing I can think of is a movie, that you need a ticket to go see a movie. And so you go and you buy your \$25 ticket, wherever they are now. And you have this ticket to get into the movie and the guy at the door, tears it in half and gives you your stubb, and you go in and you sit down, because the movie is what you really want. What did the ticket do? The ticket gets you to what you really wanted. I'm sure we can all imagine just how many half ticket stubs the movie theater, people have to clean up after every movie because you just you're done with it. It got you what you want it, you're done with it.

The love of Christ is not our ticket. The love of Christ is, if it is a ticket, it's a ticket to itself. Because the love of Christ is the means and the goal.

Now the other fallacy is that fallacy and reverse of understanding that the love of Christ is the ultimate goal. But failing to see that the love of Christ is also the means of reaching that goal. That's the fallacy called legalism. In which we may correctly understand that what we want is eternity with Christ that He is our reward. But we fail to see that the very love of Christ that were made for in eternity is how we get there. Instead, we've we understand that what we get there through other means through our good lives or, or keeping certain laws, or not doing certain things or being some sort of good person, as if there really was one before the eyes of God, right?

There were lots of people like that in Jesus's day that saw correctly saw that the ultimate goal was eternal life with God, but they misunderstood how to get it. They were called Pharisees. And Jesus had some rather harsh things to say to them.

So these two fallacies of misunderstanding that the love of Christ is both the means, and the end. It is one of the most beautiful things of the Christian life. And if we miss it, we've missed a lot.

So now Paul has lifted up this last and final request. But as I hinted to, this is not the final request. There's another request, although it's not really a request, but it is a request. So this, remember, we talked about this Greek word hena. Hena was the one that's the word is translated 'in order to' or 'so that,' right?

And there's these four hena phrases, right? So that this so that this so that this, and that was the last one. So there's not another one. But what follows is, I believe in a real sense, the ultimate request—the request that all of this was intended to lead to and that is the request of the doxology.

That that word doxology just, it just means worship, the words of praise words of worship. And so this doxology, this praising, this lifting up of words of praise to God, really, I think that we should see this as the final request—strengthen them in their inner man, so that being made more fully reliant upon you, Christ dwells more intimately, the fellowship is more close, the communion more intimate, so that they may have greater comprehension of the love of God for His people, so that they be filled with the fullness of Christ, so that God be glorified.

Now, I take that in a couple of ways. The first way I take that is because well remember back in chapter one, how Paul sprinkled throughout chapter one this repeated request that all these things are to the glory of God. Three times in chapter one, to the praise of his glory to the praise of his glory, and to the praise of His grace. So three times in chapter one, Paul brings us back, he talks about these blessings and privileges in Christ. And the purpose the ultimate point was—for the glory of God.

The second thing that leads me to see this, the whole section that we've been talking about from verse three of chapter one, to verse 21, of chapter three, all of it, in a sense, is bracketed by words of praise. Everything with the again, the exception of those two little verses at the beginning, Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus to the believers in Ephesus, beginning from verse three, what is it? How does he begin verse three? Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And now at the end of the section comes another in different words, Blessed be the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So it's like Paul has bracketed this whole section in words of praise, almost as if he were to say: this right here, this great big grand truth that has taken us nearly a year to work through, this is the praise this is for the praise of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So this filling of the fullness of God, the fullness of Christ, that all that God has for us in Christ, being filled with that, is for the ultimate purpose of the glory of God. Just like our choosing from eternity past was for the glory of

God, our adoption into the eternal family of God was for the glory of God, our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins, the sealing of the Spirit, all of this has been, Paul specifically says, for the glory of God. How is that?

How is it that being filled with the fullness of Christ? And all this for the glory of God? How is it that both of these are the ultimate requests that Paul is making? And here's the next thing to see. Neither of these two requests are in conflict with one another. In fact, both of these requests are ultimately the same request.

As Paul is asking, that they be filled with this incomprehensible, unsurpassable knowledge of the experiencing of the love of God for His people, simultaneously, God receives maximum glory.

The best way to see this is through the words of John Piper, you've heard these from me before, you've probably read them yourself before but nobody explains this better than he. This is an original, it's not original to me for sure. It's not original to him. He takes this from other Christian writers like John Flavel, or John Owen, CS Lewis. But he summarizes this and puts this in words that are easier for me to grasp than any other words.

And so they go like this. "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." And that is so well worthy of being memorized. "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."

So the best way to see this is with again, Piper's example, which Piper's favorite example of this is the example of somebody's anniversary. Alright, so let's say it's your spouse's birthday. It's your spouse's birthday, all right. And it's about three o'clock, four o'clock in the afternoon, you're about to get off work and tonight is this day is your spouse's birthday. And on the way home, you go by Harris Teeter to pick up this great big bouquet of 12, red roses, you get this big box of nice chocolates and you gift wrap it and you go home and walk in the door and you say, get dressed. We've got reservations at your favorite restaurant. And we're gonna go there for your birthday. And you go to this restaurant, which is her favorite restaurant, and you had this wonderful meal, there was roses, there's dessert, there's the chocolates, all this kind of thing. And at the end of the meal, the check's about to come. And she looks over to you. And she says "thank you so much. This was the most wonderful birthday ever." To watch you reply, don't mention it. It's my duty.

So just like taking a safety pin to a balloon, you just deflated the whole night? Because you turned that whole night into what you were supposed to do. Had you answered that differently, had she said this was the most wonderful birthday I've had since the last one. And you say, "I couldn't imagine spinning this night any other way, because I just I enjoy spending it with you." Then you just took all the glory and the honor of the flowers and the meal. And you just took it to another level, by saying you're worthy of these flowers. You're worthy of the candy. But what really makes me happy, is you.

Isn't that the greatest honor?

In the same way, that is how God is most honored by us. When we see him rightly, as our greatest joy, and our greatest satisfaction, our greatest delight, our greatest happiness—that is the maximum glory that we can give to our Creator.

Yes, we glorify Him with our words, we glorify Him with our deeds. We glorify Him in lots of ways. But can we give him more glory than saying to him, You and You alone are what I want?

Now quite often, we have to say that from a position of faith, knowing that that's what your Word teaches us. And sometimes I really believe that sometimes I struggle to believe that, but that's what your Word tells me and so by faith, you, Lord God, you are all that I desire in heaven on earth. I have tasted you and found you to be good. You are the delight of my heart. That is how we most glorify Him.